

## Safety Recovery Systems

Many sailors with disabilities primarily sail boats with design features that make them virtually impossible to capsize, so would consider themselves to be “as safe as houses” and are probably in more danger crossing the road. However, this does not mean they are 100% safe, as accidents can and do happen. For example, a collision with a power boat or another racing yacht could see the boat damaged to the extent that it disintegrates and or sinks, leaving the sailor in the water, and although the sailor has prepared well and is wearing a suitable life jacket, the danger is not over.....

Even if the sailor is conscious, and conditions such as sea state, water temperature and wind chill factor are all favourable and there is a safety boat immediately on the scene, many sailors with disabilities will find it difficult to assist their rescuer to get them into the safety boat, and if this manoeuvre damages any of the sailors skin, it could take months to heal up with some types of disability.

While Kiwi’s are noted for their “can do” attitude, and a rescue scoop may be improvised under ideal conditions without the sailor coming to any harm, What if the conditions are not ideal?

Many disabled sailors would struggle to get a rescue sling on even when conscious, the risk of damaging skin is still quite high and the sailor’s disability may mean poor circulation with a greater risk of hypothermia, but the other option is a rescue sling or basket. There are a few designs available on the market to suit different situations and rescue boats, but the most important factor is the safety boat’s size and freeboard. They are all designed to lift the person out of the water horizontally to reduce the risk of “dry drowning” (more commonly known as Circum Rescue Collapse) in some form of net that the sailor is floated into alongside the rescue boat. The sailor is then rolled onto the rescue boat by pulling up on the outside of the device. One manufacturer has several versions that can be viewed here <http://www.jasonscradle.co.uk/contact.php> , or you can see another manufacturers versions here <http://www.dacon.no/rescue/products/dacon-rescue-scoop/> .

Alternatively, a club could design one to suit its own circumstances and get one made – the most important features are some form of net that is strong enough to lift a person but lets out water as it is lifted, durable enough to stand up to marine conditions and UV exposure, and have a floating outer rail and is easy to grip as it is rolled in, and is either permanently fixed to a safety boat or be quick to fit.. It could also be an advantage to attach small weights to the middle of the net so it is easier to float the sailor onto it. Lastly, test it out, and practice deploying it!